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ABSTRACT

The contradictions of campus management are examined in this speech and applied to the problems of human resource development. The author suggests that human resource development cannot be considered fully without taking into account the state of the institution and institutional development. Since human resources represents 75 percent or more of an institution's operating expenses, its management cannot be delegated solely to the business office but must become a priority of the president and the personnel department. Staff development and training is a responsibility of personnel management since it contributes to employee communications. Development planning and programming can keep personnel practitioners in contact with all parts of the campus as well as keep each department in contact with personnel and administration. (LBH)

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CASC/AAHE
Airlie House - February 3, 1977

Human Resource Development

One of the colossal ironies about higher education, or postsecondary education if you will, is that it is easily the largest, most significant molder of manpower and talent in our society -- yet among the nation's larger institutions, in such critical internal functions as organization, training, upward mobility, and human resource management generally, it stands dead last.

In a recent visit to one of the top bankers in the Midwest, one who runs a foundation, I presented a proposal which sought to establish a series of limited enrollment seminars that would bring together academic leadership and top management professionals, in order to give the academic managers a broader exposure to the principles and techniques of human resource management and development. The banker thought the idea was outstanding, but he declined to fund it, saying, "I doubt that higher education really wants such help!"

The implications of his impression of this community, our community, are staggering -- for many reasons. The most staggering reason of all perhaps is that the banker has a rather constant linkage with our community because he serves on one of the accrediting teams that appraises the graduates schools of business. He went on to explain just why he said what he did. He pointed out that on one of his visits to a large eastern university, some of the top administration on the campus wanted his advice on some serious problems the school was having with its accounting and systems operations. What blew the banker's mind was that he knew that the same university had on its faculty a systems and accounting expert who was in constant use as a consultant by the Pentagon in establishing and maintaining its systems operations. In the banker's mind, this

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scholar was the best talent available anywhere in this field -- and yet his genius went untapped by his own university. The banker repeated himself, "I just don't think academe will be receptive to this kind of management help." One of his obvious inferences was that our fraternity of scholars simply would not accept training exercises that were not initiated and controlled by the fraternity itself.

Coming a bit closer to home, I happened to mention my concern about the state of organization and management in higher education at a Washington reception, and the nearest listener happened to be the dean of one of the graduate schools of public administration. "Isn't it funny," he said, "we make our living teaching the rest of the world how to run its business, yet this considerable expertise is rearely assimilated in our own operations." But of course, it isn't funny.

I suggest that this irony, or gap, or deficiency -- call it what you will -- has a lot to do with the myriad troubles beseiging higher education today. We moan constantly about budgetary constraints. In fact, we nave been crying wolf so long now that we may have convinced ourselves that our problems are wholly fiscal, that we can embrace only those options and developments that are adorned in dollar signs. However, our crisis may well prove at least as much organizational as fiscal. And I think it is.

There are other troubling ironies associated with the irony I've already cited. Our largest handicapp may simply be one of attitude. I surely read as much into the banker's impression of us. We joke among ourselves about the ivory tower -- but perhaps we have lived too long as the ivory tower. Postsecondary education is big business, very big business, and has been ever

since World War II. We constitute one of the larger engines in the American economy, yet we remain prone to an Alice-in-Wonderland attitude that likes to ignore that fact. We want to shape reality, yet we are reluctant to embrace it.

Whole legions of educators are uncomfortable with such terms as relevance and accountability. Some openly abhor them. We often behave as though we can take the survival of our institutions for granted. But we can't. Our world is a consumer world. It is also a world of vast and exploding media resources and instant communications. One essential and constant link with the larger community is that we are a service institution, and yet I know a lot of our clan who abhor that term, too. We must grow dramatically in our command of communications processes in order to fulfill the service role, and to meet the competition.

This is another of those ironies I alluded to. The very essence of campus life is a communications process -- the exchange of ideas and information -- and yet we are thwarted in almost every phase of operation by an outmoded command of the communications arts.

The campus is not simply a medium of ideas and a dispenser of wisdom, knowledge, courses, and degrees. It is an engine of change; it is a comprehensive economic force; it is an employer.

In many, many instances higher education has embraced its larger responsibilities as an employer slowly and reluctantly, often in response to the standards and requirements formulated by the federal government, or to decisions rendered by the courts. This again is ironic. Higher education's prime strength is people. We are a people-intensive industry -- probably more

so than any other segment of the economy.

The typical community college today is spending 85¢ of every operating dollar on personnel -- and the large university, despite its massive investment in research apparatus, is not far behind. Yet personnel is usually the most underdeveloped, understaffed, and underutilized management function on the campus.

I might illustrate the point by asking who here knows who or what is the largest employer in Philadelphia, our fourth largest city? I suspect some of you know, but anyone who answers Exxon, or Penn Mutual, or the federal government is wrong. The answer is the University of Pennsylvania -- a private employer.

This is hardly an isolated example. If all the demographic data were at hand here, I am sure states could be cited where the largest employer, public or private, would be the state university system. Similar data on the hundreds of community colleges around the land would show in many cases, I am sure, that they are largest employers in the particular counties or districts they serve. Yet I know too that many such colleges have yet to appoint their first professional to handle employment and employee relations for them.

I don't think the average college really knows where it ranks as an employer in either its county, region, or state. More tragically, I doubt it has even tried to find out where it ranks.

If higher education is going to regain its credability with the community -- and I hope this is a concern we all share -- if its going to

succeed in its larger mission then we are going to have to see our campus community as a totality, and to deal with our operations in that framework. We will have to become equally conscious of our impact on, and our linkages to, the larger community, the society, the economy, and their needs.

In the ideal world, we would not only identify all those external linkages, but we would analyze them in such a way that we might program and orchestrate our responses to them. And I think this is a direction in which most institutions would like to think they are pointed, through a process or mechanism they loosely tab as "development."

Realistically, I don't think we can hope to manage soundly those external linkages and responses, until we more effectively develop and manage the linkages and responses which are internal to our operations. A hard-nosed businessman might put it more bluntly, by saying that it's ridiculous to think we can deal effectively with our external affairs if we are not on top of the internal affairs.

The final irony, in my view, is that if we really challenged our campus community -- and I mean the whole campus community, staff and administrative personnel, as well as instructional personnel -- to look at its mission in this larger light, to explore the full range of community and regional needs in the way that we target our resources and services, and to meet the educational consumer at least half way, we wouldn't have to worry about accountability in its richest sense. And I hardly think we would have to worry about filling our courses, or paying for them. I hope you saw the headline in last week's Chronicle of Higher Education: "Colleges are Still Weak in

Vocational Training, Employers Complain."

As one college president observed at a Wingspread conference we gave last summer, we (meaning the academic community) spend too much time talking to ourselves, and not enough time talking to the people whose support and advice we need.

Again, I think attitude is pivotal. Our progress has been seriously impeded, over the years by arrogance, elitism, and paternalism. And more recently, our credibility has suffered heavily damaged by the same causes. And when we have been forced to confront our paternalism, as we surely have been by federal mandates, our response all to often has been to slap a bandaid on the president's office, and call it affirmative action.

Don't misunderstand -- I am not attacking the affirmative action office and officer. What I am attacking is tokenism. If the appointee tapped for affirmative action has real qualifications in human resource management, I couldn't be happier for the institution. But we all know that in many cases, the candidate has been chosen largely to satisfy the politics of race and sex. Whatever the person's qualifications, that office sometimes represents the college's first staff primarily involved in matters of personnel, and that person finds himself or herself dealing with problems and tasks that would have been met years earlier if the college had professionalized its personnel function. After all, affirmative action is nothing more than sound personnel management.

In short, what I am trying to say is that campus management, on the whole, is a bundle of contradictions, and the contradictions must be addressed.

All of this may seem a round-about way of addressing my assigned topic of "Human Resource Development," but I don't think we can begin to address that concept without looking first at the state of the institution and then at institutional development as a total process. Human resource development is one part of that process -- and I submit, the largest part.

How then will human resource development be accomplished? And where do we start? In the interest of time, and for the sake of discussion, let me try some suggestions.

First of all, if human resources represent three-fourths or more of our operating outlay, then I don't think its functions and responsibilities can be handled from a corner of the business office. The stakes are too high for the mission to be carried from any post other than a seat in the president's cabinet. In fact, in this day of explosive labor relations and pitched court battles, I rather pity the president who doesn't really understand that he is the chief personnel officer of the institution, just as he is the chief executive officer. And he should want to keep in constant touch with the officer to whom he delegates the technical tasks of that role.

How should the assignment be structured and titled? There are many options. Personnel management is both an art and a science -- and hardly yet fully developed in either respect. And in practical operating terms, it is both a staff role and a line-management function. Ideally, I think it should be a balanced blend of the two. And as such, it ought to command both the visibility, authority, and campus-wide range of a vice presidency.

I am told that at Wellesley, personnel is now part of the domain of

the vice president for development. If that sounds farfetched, it isn't. It actually reflects the concept I am trying to convey here. At other institutions, this comprehensive role is now pegged as the vice president for human resources, or the vice president for personnel, or the vice president for employee relations, and even executive vice president.

Such rank carries, among other things, the obvious advantage of giving personnel ready access to your legal counsel -- and the dialogue between the two could be almost non-stop these days.

I hope that didn't sound facetious. Actually there are many reasons that human resource development should be programed in the personnel department. Staff development and training is one of the vital ways in which an organization communicates with itself, and employee communications is obviously a primary responsibility of personnel management. Continuity is another reason. If you leave each department to run its own staff development, the effort may well fall short of these objectives. Ideally, training ought to be a vital medium, not only for communication but for the solution of problems -- both for the anticipation of problems and for the facilitation of solutions. Development planning and programming can serve not only to keep the personnel practitioners in touch with every corner of the campus, but to help keep every department in touch with personnel and indirectly with administration. I want to close with a thought I borrow from someone who knows a lot more about human resource development than I do. When he leads a discussion of this kind, Dr. Al Solomon, the manager of organizational development and relations at UCLA, he usually reminds his audiences that personnel is the ideal base for training. He points out that when personnel has this responsibility, it promotes both organizational development

and cohesion by developing staff capabilities and more effective working relationships. An effective training and development function provides for early impact on the interaction among individuals and among segments of the institution -- instead of a fire-fighting approach to problems which have already reached an impasse.